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Note verbale dated 8 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and has the honour to transmit a concept note for the open debate on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region", to be held on Monday, 21 March 2016, at 10 a.m. (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 8 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region", to be held on 21 March 2016

Background

The Great Lakes region is still going through some of the worst conflicts affecting the African continent.

The legacy of colonialism and issues related to ethnic tensions and national identity; citizen's rights and social, ethnic and political exclusion; human rights violations, poor governance, poverty, youth disenfranchisement and population pressure; and lack of economic and social development are the main root causes of these conflicts, which have become a formidable challenge to the legitimacy of the authorities in the countries concerned.

Additionally, the region's endowment with natural resources, which make a scant contribution to social and economic development, and grievances over access to them, have exposed the region to the forces of destabilization and conflict.

Context

The prevailing conflicts have a heavy impact across the Great Lakes region. The most conspicuous situation has evolved around the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where there are proxy conflicts involving regional and international actors and where the largest of all United Nations peacekeeping missions is located.

The consequences of these conflicts have been devastating for the civilian populations, who have been victims of the most egregious human rights violations, for the infrastructure and for services, undermining the development of the entire region.

The attempts to end these conflicts and establish peace have failed because they have not taken into account their complexity and have not comprehensively addressed their driving forces.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed in 2013 by 11 countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, seeks to accommodate all parties involved in the conflicts and aims at cutting support to armed groups and advancing economic growth and development through a comprehensive approach to the region's problems.

A crucial element in support of the implementation of the Framework is the integration of development activities by establishing a link between peace, security and development.

The way ahead

The link between natural resources and conflict is a great challenge for the countries of the Great Lakes region.

In order to prevent, manage and end wars in the countries of the Great Lakes region, it is essential to manage the extractive industries soundly by curbing the irresponsibility often associated with the exploitation of natural resources, to build capacities and national legal institutions to handle and allocate revenues from their exploitation, in which States play a central role, and to ensure their correct and sustainable management as an important source of development financing.

The implementation of the Framework requires financial resources to assist the countries of the region in the provision of social services for the population, generate more cross-border trade and develop hydroelectric potential in a region richly endowed with water resources.

The Framework agreement requires the coordination of efforts and the sharing of responsibility among different actors and stakeholders in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

With regard to socioeconomic development, the private sector is poised to play a vital role, and to that end it should organize itself, while national and regional institutions should be strengthened to help the private sector to increase its competitiveness.

The Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference was held in Kinshasa from 24 to 26 February 2016, stemming from the recognition that the lack of economic growth, jobs and opportunities creates a breeding ground for conflict.

In his opening statement to the Conference, the Secretary-General reminded political leaders of the region of their commitment to enact policies to expand the domestic private sector, encouraging them to create an environment that ensures business operations and investments.

He appealed to private sector leaders to fully contribute to the goal of transforming the region by strengthening productive capacities, creating decent jobs and livelihoods, improving economic governance and fostering inclusive development and shared responsibility.

The Secretary-General called upon development partners to work towards the integration of the region into international value chains by changing the nature of exports from raw materials to value-added exports and invited global business leaders and investors to build bridges for regional cooperation and integration by creating larger markets and pools of resources and acknowledging that the region can be an engine for economic growth and development.

Rationale

The open debate could:

1. Provide the opportunity for exchanges on the current political developments in countries of the Great Lakes region and on ways to recommit support to international efforts for peace and violence mitigation in affected countries.

2. Focus on how to resolve outstanding contentious issues, especially the need to definitively neutralize armed groups and the issue of elections and how to make

them effective instruments for democratizing the region, and explore ways to achieve durable peace, reconciliation and development.

3. Address the issue of illegal exploitation of natural resources and discuss ways to transform natural resources into drivers of development of the Great Lakes region and the role States must play to ensure the correct and sustainable management of natural resources.

4. Discuss lessons learned from the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region initiative against illegal exploitation of natural resources and sanctions regimes imposed by the Security Council.

5. Discuss the role of women and the importance of strengthening their capacities as mediators in intercommunal conflicts, namely in areas such as access to land and peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

6. Enable a discussion and explore ways to address issues of a regional dimension and modalities of cooperation and joint programming between regional organizations such as the African Union, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, with a view of identifying opportunities for promoting regional development.

7. Afford an opportunity to assess the outcomes of the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference and elaborate on the contribution of the private sector to regional peace and development.

8. Discuss ways to increase the participation of international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank and regional and national financial institutions in funding programmes and projects of a regional dimension.

9. Reflect on efforts needed to ensure that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region can deliver on the objectives set for the peoples of the region.

Conclusion

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework has faced significant challenges over the last years. It is expected that the open debate will provide an opportunity to reinvigorate national and international commitments towards its implementation, as well as to mobilize resources and work towards the implementation of the United Nations Development Group Great Lakes regional strategy.

The following briefers will introduce the theme:

The Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

The African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit

A representative of the World Bank